

- Okay.

- So, I got married.

- Yes, that's where we're leaving off, go ahead, yes.

- Steve did graduate work at Penn State, and they didn't have a school of social work, so, you know, back in those days you just followed where your husband went. That led us to the US army, and he was stationed at the Manned Spacecraft Center for three years, and this was during Vietnam.

- Wow.

- I volunteered at the... They had, like, a thrift shop on the airbase. That's what I did along with having a child. And then when we moved to Minnesota I started doing volunteer work at YES, and the guy that was executive director suggested that maybe I'd like to take some courses at United and that's how I got out to United.

- Really? What is YES?

- Youth Emergency Service, it was a telephone hotline.

- Really? Okay. Fascinating, okay, and then when you went to United, just to finish this off, did you know at that time you were going to be a pastor?

- No, I figured I'd go into counseling, and work in a church related setting.

- And did you go into the ordained ministry from United right after you graduated?

- Mmhm, but in the meantime I figured out that I could be a pastor. I didn't have any role models, but there were women when I got to seminary that were actually out doing internships, and doing ministry, so I realized, oh, I can do this.

- Yeah, oh, that's wonderful. I'm so glad you did, Cathy. So, talking about the re-imagining community, you played a central role in this, so if you could talk some about how you first got involved and what role you played in the re-imagining community.

- Well, we had a committee to implement the Ecumenical Decade for women from the World Council of Churches, and the re-imagining event grew out of the planning that we were doing around that.

- When you say, we, who was that again?

- Well, whoever was on this committee. Sally Hill was the staff person. I don't know who all. It's just a blur of faces. Mary Gates was probably involved in that.

- How did you get on the committee?

- I was on the board of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, and I had been pretty heavily involved there. I had served on the search committee that brought Gary Ryerson as the executive director, and I was also on the search committee for the Minnesota Council of Churches when Page Hemmerlin was hired. So, I was pretty involved ecumenically. And I also chaired the council at some point, but I'm not remembering the dates for that.

- Not surprising, it's all been a long time. What do you remember about that process of planning the re-imagining conference? What was that like?

- Planning the conference? Well, it was very collaborative. There had been a retreat, which I was not at where the idea for re-imagining came out of that. Sally Hill, Marianne Lundy, Gerry Smith, maybe, from the University of Minnesota. There were a number of women who had been on this committee that were at that retreat, and it was out of that that the start of the planning came forth. Some place along the line they asked me to chair, and Mary Kay'll be vice chair, and we quickly decided that every committee would have both a clergy person and a layperson as co-chairs.

- I didn't realize that, okay.

- Everything that we did had clergy and lay.

- Okay, 'cause at that point Mary Kay was lay.

- Right, Mary Kay was lay.

- That's right, okay.

- We did the planning.

- How was it being co-chair?

- Well, it worked out just fine, Mary Kay and I got along just well. We must have started planning in the late 80s. 89 maybe, or 90. Maybe 90. And I took a year off some place along the line. I took time off, I don't know if it was a full year, and the planning went on, and then Mary Kay started seminary, and she took time off. It just kept going.

- Yes, but what I've heard, it really grew, the plans for the conference. It started out and it kept getting bigger. Is that what you recall? What did that feel like?

- Well, some of it was the result of the money that we got from the Presbyterian Church. Now, I don't know. Marianne and Sally were instrumental in getting that money. There was a large capital campaign that they were doing. Fundraising campaign. The Ecumenical Decade had been targeted as the recipient of some of that money, and so that's where... And once we got those funding, I think that's when it moved to be a much more expansive event, and I think that the movement to become bigger happened during that period of time that I was away, but included in that was since it was part of the World Council of Churches to really capitalize on the Ecumenical Decade for churches in solidarity with women worldwide, and that's when it become international, and then of course we had to deal with all the getting scholarships, and getting people here from around the world.

- It was an amazing undertaking, it really is.

- A lot of credit goes to Sally for kind of spearheading this, and she was the staff person, so she had the time to do the work that needed to be done.

- Yeah, I've read your essay In Remembering Re-Imagining, but if you could say something about what that 93 conference, what the experience was like for you.

- Well, I think I said that I attended a totally different conference than everybody else.

- You did.

- Because we were from the get-go of the event we were concerned with making sure that registration was flowing and the rooms were set up, and all of sort of the administrative kinds of things that go into running a big conference. I mean, there were what?

- Over 2,000, yes.

- Women and some men that were there, and as the weekend unfolded there were various other kinds of things that were going on behind the scenes we needed to care for and think about.

- Do you remember what any of those in particular?

- Well, the biggest one was a desire by the lesbian women to have some words and time on the podium, which had not been planned, of course. And so we had to call a meeting of the planning team, I don't remember what we called ourselves maybe it was coordinating council, but I think that came later after we established the community, to talk about what that impact would be.

- Was that a difficult decision?

- It was. Because we knew that there were people from the various conservative branches of our respective denominations that were present, and were wanting to find negative things upon what we were doing.

- But decided to go ahead with it anyway?

- Right. Besides, probably couldn't stop it. That might not be exactly true. They did want to have out approval to do that.

- You were able to attend probably some of the plenary sessions that may been about it. Are there any moments for you, I know it's been a while, but any moments that particularly stand out for you?

- For almost all of the liturgy that we did, we all had roles, Mary Kay and I had roles. Other people on the committee had roles. So, we were actually leading the worship, and the experience. I remember Jane loves presentation, and talking about healing from the outside until the outside was healed, the inside never would be healed, which was an image that I've carried with me for a long time.

- Could you just say a little bit about why that image really strikes you?

- Well, one of the things that we struggled with as a planning committee was the fact that we were all white women, or predominantly white women, and how do we have participation from and hear other voices. I think that influenced our selection of speakers as we went along. But I've always had, well, as I said, I'm just gonna go to the West Side Christian Parish, and heal the world or something. But I've always had a commitment to social justice, and thinking about marginalized. That just really struck me that the flow of power was different. The power needed to go out to heal the margins before we could really all live centered lives.

- Mmhm, I have to ask a question, when you talked about leading the liturgy, I'm just wondering, you know, you had been involved in planning and everything, do you remember what it was like to be up there and leading the liturgy? Was it what you anticipated? How did it feel to be doing that?

- Well, it was pretty exhilarating. Madilyn had it very well-scripted. All we needed to do was follow what was written. It was scripted and choreographed. I mean it was not just a static liturgy. We were in different places around the room.

- Yeah, yeah. Talk about the backlash. First of all, did it affect you personally?

- Only in so far as I was named in a number of the publications from Good News, and I continued. I mean it wasn't just the one shot deal or whatever. You know, every once in a while when they needed to raise money. Oh, okay.

- Yeah, how did you deal with that?

- Oh, I just ignored it, but I was far enough away removed, and in our system, you know, you're appointed, and they can't take your job away from you, which gave a lot of United Methodist women a lot of security.

- That's a good point, yeah. How did you react to what was happening to other people?

- I remember thinking, you gotta be kidding.

- Really? Yeah.

- Where is this coming from? It's kinda like today. Donald Trump folks. You gotta be kidding. This is craziness, but it's the same people, unfortunately.

- You hadn't anticipated that it would be like this?

- No, I don't think any of us. We knew that we might get a little flack. Never to the extent that it happened. Back to your question about what do you remember from the conference, I can't say her name. I don't know whether she was Korean or Chinese. (speaking in foreign language) And bite the apple. And so, I have a couple of apples that still sit on my desk.

- Do you?

- Right.

- What about that was so powerful to you?

- Well, it was just being audacious, and doing what needed to be done, and that it would be okay.

- I have ask for just a minute, you know, there was Sophia, there was the Milk and Honey Ritual. Do you remember any particular reactions to that when it occurred?

- When it occurred?

- Yeah, or afterwards.

- Well, afterwards the conservatives glommed onto the Milk and Honey, saying this was communion. Well, we had worked so hard not to have it be communion because we knew that what we were planning, not everyone would be able to feel comfortable in taking communion, and so we designed a ritual that we felt would be inclusive of all the denominations, and it's very scripturally based in the Old Testament. So, I think we anticipated that that might raise some heckles along the way. Maybe moreso from the Theologians that were there than those of all that were doing sort of the administrative kinds of things.

- How do you account for the backlash?

- I think that people fear change. There were lots of different images of God presented, different understandings of church challenging the institutional church as it existed then and exist now. In various denominations, there were at that time rumblings of women who wanted to be heard, so this became a place where that voice could come together, and be strong. And that was very threatening, and people who had not done their biblical work didn't understand Sophia. Didn't understand the feminine part of God had been written out of theology, and even though it was there biblically it had been interpreted in such a way that it was all masculine. So, that was very threatening to the traditionalists, it's still threatening. Language is an interesting piece, and I think we've gone way back, taken lots of steps backwards in the use of inclusive language. Even for people, that's the other piece that has been challenging. So, the climate was ready to have people speak out, and be upset about what was going on.

- Were you involved in the formation of the community after the backlash?

- Mmhm.

- Thought you were. Could you say about how that happened? How was that decision made?

- It wasn't too long after the conference was over, and we may have already set a meeting to come together to debrief what had happened, and to do an evaluation. We kept meeting because the stories kept coming in. We decided, it was a joint decision, that we needed to be there to support the women, especially the women that were losing their jobs, and were being so amazingly challenged by their denominations.

- When you said stories coming in, is that the kind of stories you mean?

- Yeah.

- And so, what kind of role did you play then after the community was formed?

- Mary Kay and I continued to chair the coordinating council, that may have been the name of the planning team. Boy, after all these years you just forget.

- I know, I know.

- As you get older, you forget, but anyway, it just seemed logical that we would continue in leadership. We also clear that we weren't gonna do it, that leadership needed to be shared, and that was one of the fundamental tenants that we had as we set up the planning team that this was a coordinated event. We probably did call ourselves the coordinating council. We divided up the task that needed to be done, getting a 501 C3, and getting the state incorporation, doing the various steps financially that needed to be set up. And Nancy and Verna King and Pam Jurin were all part of the founding group, and Sally, of course.

- And the publications started very early on.

- Right, and that was Nancy and Pam that did that.

- How long did you stay involved in the community, do you remember?

- I don't know. I was thinking about that as I was looking at your questions. I don't remember. It would have been probably two to three years, maybe. Then, I think the demands of the local church were such that I needed to step away, and then in 97, I was appointed as a district superintendent, and our son became quite ill and died. So, there was all that going on in 97. So, some of the events prior to that, I think I had moved away from Re-Imagining. When we were talking earlier, and I said I don't remember how many conferences there were, I know that Mary Kay and I had leadership, speaking kinds of parts in the second one, worked with Rita Nakashima-Brock a lot on that second one. Then, it all becomes fuzzy. The one that they did on power, and I don't know what year that was, but anyway...

- Offhand, I don't either.

- I was just there. I think was it Letty Russell? Was she was the speaker?

- Yes.

- Alice Walker's daughter.

- Rebecca Walker.

- Right, and it was so clear that Letty Russell had not moved on, and that the world had moved on even in that short period of time, and she couldn't hear.

- Could be possibly be Mary Daily that you're thinking about?

- Maybe it was Mary Daily.

- Yeah, it was Mary Daily and Rebecca Walker who were together.

- Yeah, Mary Daily. Whatever. One of the pioneers. Yeah, 'cause Letty Russell did move on. She wrote other books after that. Mary Daily did, too, but it was clear in the presentations that Mary could not relate to what she was saying, and that was an eye opener for me to say you need to pay attention to what other generations bring to the table, and maybe you don't necessarily need to be at the table anymore. You can receive the gifts that they bring, but your voice needs to be a different voice. And this was all around power, and understanding power, and that, I'm sure, was as I was moving into being a superintendent, or was already one, where my power had changed, and how do you listen to different people and different voices.

- Fascinating, wow, that is great. Talking about the community, kind of having you reflect on it, which you're already doing, which is great. How would you define Re-Imagining?

- I'm thinking back to our discussion around the word, Re-Imagining, because that word was not solidified at that retreat, and we talked about whether it was Re-Imaging, or Re-Imagining. As I'm remembering, my feelings, my thinking about this, or maybe it was group thinking about this that we weren't necessarily re-imagining that which was, but re-imagining that which would be. And I think that is still even as we've been meaning as a small group to do this archive work, and so forth. It is for the future, how do we continue to re-imagine that it's not a re-image, it's a re-imagining that which can come forth. So, that's sort what I understand Re-Imagining to be.

- That is great.

- And that's why I think we continued after the backlash, that we weren't going to go back to the same image, and re-image it in a lesser way that we were going to continue to re-imagining, so Re-Imagining actually became a verb. That we are re-imagining, we're not static.

- Right. I think you've kind of hinted at this, and it's been good. How would you say that feminist theology affected the structure and functioning of the community?

- Well, I think it's part of this re-imagining that we were going to do structure differently. That's why we had lay and clergy co-chairs for all the committees. When we had a discussion this morning about, we've never voted on anything!

- Yeah, that's right, yes.

- Because we worked on a consensus model, which often took a while to get to consensus. We understood the value of all the voices around the table, so we spent extensive time checking in, and then we did our work. For those people that were frustrated with that, there were people along the way who came in and came out of the committee. One person that will go nameless came in, was recruited to do some work, and she was so upset that we spent all this time doing the checking in time, and she said, "You could be so much more efficient "if you just get down to work." I think we just learned to live together in community, and to value where each person was, and then we got down to work, and then the work went a lot easier, and if we're working on a consensus model because we knew what some of the issues were that people dealing with, it made it easier to engage in conversation, and that the relationship was much richer and stronger, and I think that is one of the gifts that women bring. The feminist theology is about relationships. God's relationship with us, our relationship with God, that it is a more relational experience than God telling us what to do or whatever.

- Actually, could you describe what... I know what you mean by check-in, but maybe you could explain it.

- As we gathered at our meeting times, we would go around the table and just share what was going on with



each of us. How our families were, what was impacting our lives. So, that's what I mean by checking in.

- Yeah, yes, exactly. What challenges were faced by the community while it was in existence? And how did the community address them? I think funding was an issue, although I think we still were funded by part of the Tri-Council Coordinating Committee, which was the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches, and Minnesota Council of Churches. We probably got money out of the subscriptions to the journal. I think that some of the challenges are what was next, how long do we keep doing this, is it finite or is it on-going challenges over? We hired a staff person finally. Boy, I'm not remembering, but it was sort of the challenges were primarily, from my perspective, were organizational, not necessarily theological. The theology was stuff was goin' on out here. People were writing for the journal, and submitting stuff to the journal, and discussion from that, but from the coordinating council perspective, it was primarily administrative organizational, and we knew that there were groups like the group that you're in that continued to meet, and some that still continue to meet.

- The small groups?

- Small groups, right. We formed group at Hamlin Church when I was pastor there. I don't think that group continues to meet, but it did after I left. We met for breakfast.

- So, it would have been several years that they met?

- Oh, yeah. 'Cause I didn't leave there until 97.

- Okay, yeah, so that's a few.

- Lasted after that.

- Sure, yeah. As you think back about it, what aspects of Re-Imagining were most significant to you, and why?

- So, on several levels, one, by being chair and working through a different way of working, I gained a lot of skill in how to work collaboratively, and I think that's a gift that I have, and I have administrative gifts. That's where I could bring my gifts. I think of Mary Gates, who always has something sell, and that was her gift. She did just such a wonderful job of having stuff for people to buy. Learning is that you don't have to do it all yourself, that various people bring their gifts to the table, and Susan Martin came in that year that I was gone, and just did the liturgy, and I got back, and there I was, oh my gosh.

- Wow!

- To trust the gifts of other women, and the power that comes from that, and then to see it played out at the event, and continue to play out. That was one of the highlights.

- That is great.

- I think another one after the conference, and people like Marianne Lundy, and Gene Audrey Powers, Joey Suel, some of these women that did not cave into the forces of tradition, and continued to stand up for what they believed was right. That served as a great witness. Was it Rita that got interviewed on one of the TV shows?

- Mmhm.

- Powerful. Voices of women were not going to be lost. That is important.

- Did your involvement in Re-Imagining change your perspective on feminist theology, or the church? And if so, how?

- My call to ministry was to change the church. Seriously.

- Yeah, say some more about that, Cathy. That's interesting.

- I've just always had an understanding that that's what my call was. Was to change the church, I didn't know how that was gonna happen, or what was gonna happen, but that's what my calling was. My call came during an experience in Illinois. I was raised Presbyterian. We didn't have church camps like they do in Minnesota where we went to camp. I did my camping through the Girl Scouts, but they would have youth gatherings for youth at college campuses. And so, my call came as an experience at one of these events at Monument. My senior year in high school, the youth were to put on the church service, and the pastor wouldn't let me preach 'cause I'd been into him, and talked to him about how, well, I was an outspoken, young woman. He asked my best friend at church to preach the sermon, so she and I wrote the sermon. (laughing) So, all the things that I wanted to change about the church back then, I don't know what it was, got incorporated into it anyway.

- I love that story.

- But that sense of call to change the church has been part and parcel of my understanding of theology and what I was to do in the church, and that's why I'm running again for judicial council is that thanks to Bishop O who preached a sermon at United for on Methodist days, and he talked about call, and I was sittin' there, and thinkin', well, this is good, students need to hear that, and all of a sudden, it was like, and you do, too. (laughing) I had already scheduled a meeting with him after lunch, after that on that Methodist day 'cause his schedule, and we had a couple of other things that we needed to talk about. And I said, "Well, you know what, I told you that "I didn't wanna run for judicial council. "After your sermon, I've changed my mind." And they had already sent the list of names, the College of Bishops had sent it into the Council of Bishops. And I said, "Is it too late?" He said, "Oh, it's never too late." So, he turned my name in, and John Hopkins contacted me, and said, "Good. "We have your name down, it'll be on the list."

- You're still hearing and answering the call. So, when you talk about changing the church, can you say a little bit more about what that has meant to you on different times, or in different ways?

- I think what I was talking about before about being able to listen the various voices has been important to me as I was the superintendent, but also the work that I did at the general church level, which was actually doing some restructure work on the General Council and Ministries. Being able to put all the pieces together into something new.

- And did Re-Imagining relate to that in some way?

- Yeah, I was elected to the General Council and Ministries starting in 1992, so it was 92 through 2000. In 92 is when we first began talking about restructuring the church, and so a lot of the new stuff that I had been hearing through Re-Imagining and doing through Re-Imagining, then I was able to take to the general church level, and have that, be open to hearing new things, and working with people in new ways.

- Are there kind of specific things that you're thinking of?

- Not really. There was learning about Margaret Wheatley's work and leadership in the new science, Glenda Oyang around, what do they call that? Fractals and how pieces fit together. Adaptive learning, which was much later, so to be open. I think the Re-Imagining piece laid the groundwork to re-imagine something new, and that it could be something new, not just tinkering with the old, which is what we're still doing.

- Okay, that makes sense, yeah.

- And that's some of the thing that really challenges me on the judicial council because you have this book of discipline that is very state, and the constitution, and that's what you work out of, and so how is it that you bring the newness out of something that is pretty static?

- Quite a job.

- Right, and to be focused rather than thinking, oh boy. So, that's the challenge of the judicial council.

- Sure, yeah. What specific contributions do you think Re-Imagining made to Christian theology or liturgy?

- I think it opened up new worlds of how to do liturgy, that it's not just static. You can be faithful to the traditional and still do it in a new way. You can gather in new ways, so they criticized, they, being the Good News folk and the Layman magazine or whatever from the Presbyterian church that we gathered around tables, and that we had coloring, and that we sang chants. Probably, well, it would have been in 1996, I think, a number of us were at the national leadership training for Annual Conference Leadership. Well, we came in and we were all sitting around tables, and then they started singing some of the chants from Re-Imagining.

- Really?

- I don't think people knew. It was Mary Gates, and Jean Justice. Oh, I don't know, there were a number of us who had been active participants on the Re-Imagining Council or part of Re-Imagining. So, they going, really?

- Do you know who planned that?

- I don't know. It might have been Marsha McFien, looking back at it.

- It wasn't these Re-Imagining people sitting there.

- Uh uh. (laughing) And here we are, then we walked in, and we were sitting at a table. We said, oh, really? And there's paper on these tables.

- No! And this is the planning for the Minnesota Annual--

- No, this is for the general church.

- For the general church, really? The general conference, wow.

- All the boards and agencies had the leadership from each annual conference come to figure out what they were supposed to do for the next quadrennial.

- That's amazing.

- We just looked at each other and started laughing.

- I bet you did.

- You know, after all of the crap that we been getting around these things, the mechanical kinds of things that we did. I was like, oh, really? So, back to the question about theology. So, what we did has become mainstream. The other piece that I think has happened is that women's voices are listened to, and it gave voice to women doing theology, and a lot of the women that were presenters are still significant voices today, and new people have come along behind.

- Now, earlier you said you feel like we've gone many backwards on inclusive language.

- I think we have.

- So, in some ways, some of it has gone forward, and other parts have not?

- Right. Elaine Pagel's work, I think she came after Re-Imagining. A lot of the women who were speaking, who were writing, and teaching prior to Re-Imagining gained a different voice because of Re-Imagining.

- Do you think that voice was heard or is it heard in the churches?

- Probably not. When people talk about being spiritual and not religious, you know that that's who was at that conference we're the women that are spiritual. Denominations really didn't matter. It was experiencing the spirit in a new way, and allowing the spirit to be present in a new way, and so the Re-Imagining groups carried that on. I think today the phenomena of reading groups is a continuation of that spirit kind of work in a new way.

- Yeah, where you're moving toward the forward, which is to the future, excuse me, so what do you think is the greatest legacy of Re-Imagining today?

- I'm somewhat surprised at the response that you're getting in the work at you're doing, that it's still out there. Because all of us around that table have kinda moved on. We're not stuck back in 1993. We're wanting to say it was important, and it needs to be archived, the experience that I had with Rebecca Coleman, is that her name?

- Monica?

- Monica Coleman, who got excited when she found out that I had been co-chair. She said, "Where is it? We need to find it!" She was asking where is the research. It needs to be accessible to current scholars, and so I think that's the legacy that we continue to bring forward, and the work that you're doing. I mean it's gonna take a huge quantum leap in that arena.

- With a lot of support, which is wonderful. Finishing up here, but what would Re-Imagining, or what should Re-Imagining mean today? What does it mean to Re-Imagine?

- Well, I think it's back to that concept of re-imagining as a verb that continues going forward and I think that's the gift that we give the future, and we know that nothing is static, and we can't go back even though there are people that want to in the political arena these days. We just can't go back to what was past. We have to move forward, and I think that's God pulling us forward into the new future. God's not static. God is always active in bringing something new. That's what it's all about. That's what makes life exciting.

- Exactly. I have one very specific question. You know we're working on this Re-Imagining website, and I'd love to hear if you have any thoughts about what would be good to include, who we should target, who would benefit from it, any thoughts you have about that website.

- There needs to be a lot of links to the work that you're doing right now, and to authors. How you get people to Google Re-Imagining and find out I think is a challenge that we have, and it may mean that we may need to do some significant fundraising in order to put ads on other people's websites for Re-

Imagining.

- When you said links to authors, I just wanna be clear. Which authors were you thinking of?

- Whoever's writing good stuff these days.

- So, current things, gotcha.

- You know, as in authors, there's new things being discovered, new ways of thinking, and there's so much that you don't know. Was listening this morning to fundraising on MPR, Cary Miller was talking about the black hole.

- I was hearing that, too.

- I'm thinking, no, I don't think about this! But yeah, it's all of God. I don't know. But who has time? But that's why you listen to MPR. You can go on and do an ad for them or something.

- And I'd join in. I was listening to the same thing. Finally, this has been wonderful, Cathy. Is there anything that we haven't discussed that you would like to talk about or you'd like to include?

- Oh, I don't think so. It's sad to have lost people like Nancy Bernacane and Sally Hill. Who's the woman that just died?

- Joe Ringenberg.

- Joe Ringenberg. Because they were such an important part of what Re-Imagining was, and it's good to think about how to bring this to the next generation especially in this day of divisiveness that we live in.

- Thank you, that's wonderful, thank you.